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## Medical Practice Questions

EDITOR'S NOTE: From time to time medical practice questions from organizations with a legitimate interest in the information are referred to the Scientific Board by the Quality Care Review Commission of the California Medical Association. The opinions offered are based on training, experience and literature reviewed by specialists. These opinions are, however, informational only and should not be interpreted as directives, instructions or policy statements.

### Liver Transplantation

#### QUESTION:

*Is liver transplantation considered established medical practice or does it remain investigational?*

#### OPINION:

In the opinion of the Scientific Advisory Panels on General Surgery and Internal Medicine, and the Committee on Organ and Tissue Transplantation, liver transplantation is considered accepted medical practice for patients carefully selected by experienced medical transplant teams in centers with the appropriate resources and commitment to support such a program.

Published reports have shown that cyclosporine is an effective immunosuppressive agent and that its use has significantly contributed to the improved survival of liver transplant patients. Since 1980 one-year survival rates have been reported as high as 70%; projections for longer term survival are promising. Individual patients have survived many years with good quality of life after transplantation.

Liver transplantation offers a reasonable therapeutic approach for some patients with end-stage liver disease who have exhausted other available medical and surgical treatment. Though liver transplantation merits broader application, as recommended by the National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Conference statement on liver transplantation, June 20-23, 1983, its full potential will be defined ultimately by continued research and coordinated evaluation. The National Institutes of Health report concludes, and this opinion concurs, that this evaluation "can best be achieved by expansion of this technology to a limited number of centers where performance of liver transplantation can be carried out under optimal conditions."